Note from the Editor-in-Chief

Issue 32 of EASTM includes, apart from a number of book reviews, three articles that represent the diversity of our research field. Dealing with spatial concepts in ancient China, the reception and dramatic reworking and re-interpretation of Newtonian mechanics in nineteenth-century Korea, and the narratives of Buddhist healing practices in medieaval China, they exemplify the continued vibrancy of research on East Asian science, technology and medicine. I have no doubt that readers will enjoy this issue of individual articles as much as they have the more theme-orientated last two numbers of our journal.

In her paper on the *Rong Cheng shi* 容成氏, a bamboo slip manuscript from the late fourth century AD of Chu 楚 provenance, Vera Dorofeeva-Lichtmann investigates the passage on the 'Nine Provinces' (*Jiu zhou* 九州), which has aroused substantial scholarly interest since the text was published in 2002. After an elucidation of the title of the manuscript ("Mr. Rong Cheng", a mythical sage ruler of antiquity mentioned in ancient Chinese texts), using fine-tuned philological analysis she investigates the concept of the 'Nine Provinces', comparing it to descriptions of this spatial system in transmitted texts, that is the *Shu jing* 書經 (Book of Documents), *Lü shi chun qiu* 呂氏春秋 (Mister Lü's Spring and Autumn [Annals]), *Er ya* 爾雅 (*Erya* dictionary), *Zhou li* 周禮 (Zhou Rituals), and the *Huainan zi* 淮南子 (Masters from Huainan). Her particular approach is to consider the *Rong Cheng shi* version as a certain kind of terrestrial representation so as to determine what are the spatial concepts conveyed through the bamboo slip manuscript, and whether, typologically, similar patterns can be found in the transmitted texts. After a detailed investigation of the structure of the description of the 'Nine Provinces', their names and landmarks (especially rivers), and the three interrelated spatial and civilising concepts (draining floodwater for tillage, paving river routes, creating habitable land admist the floodwaters) in the *Rong Cheng shi*, and also differences to and between the transmitted texts, the author arrives at the following conclusions: The *Rong Cheng shi* version of the 'Nine Provinces' represents a compressed, eclectic fusion of at least three spatial concepts distinguished to differing degrees in transmitted texts. It shows apparent similarities especially with the relevant descriptions in the *Shu jing* and the *Zhou li*, but differs markedly from both texts in the names of the 'provinces', the types of their locations, and the structure of their descriptions. In the author's view, the transmitted accounts are, in effect, different versions of the same conception of the 'Nine Provinces' established by the mythical emperor Yu the Great. Moreover, the associa-

tion of these accounts in Chinese historiographical and commentarial tradition with different periods of Chinese history represents nothing more than an attempt at avoiding the contradictions between them. Another conclusion of this important article is that the *Rong Cheng shi* version, as a source coming from a southern region practicing rice agriculture highly dependant on irrigation and drainage systems, emphasizes the draining aspect, contrasting sharply with the marginalisation of this concept in the officially recognised version in the *Shu jing*.

The second contribution to this issue is the article by Jun Yong Hoon on "A Korean Reading of Newtonian Mechanics in the Nineteenth Century". It shows how a Korean Confucian scholar, Ch'oe Han-gi 崔 漢 綺 (1803-1877), perceived and reinterpretated Newtonian mechanics in the context of his own cultural environment. In his paper, the author provides us with a detailed intellectual biography of his historical protagonist, who based his prolific writings both on traditional Confucian philosophy and Western science. He succinctly traces the origins of Ch'oe's knowledge of Western agricultural, hydrological, mechanical, mathematical, astronomical, metrological, and medical knowledge back to Chinese translations. In the field of Newtonian mechanics Ch'oe's primary source was the *Tantian* 談 天 (Conversations about the Sky), which was a Chinese translation of the fourth edition of John Herschel's (1792-1871) *Outlines of Astronomy* (1851), published in 1859 by Li Shanlan 李 善 蘭 (1811-1882), a Chinese mathematician, and Alexander Wylie (1815-1887), an English missionary. It seems that Ch'oe was the first and only Korean reader of the book before the end of the nineteenth century. Ch'oe Han-gi was of the opinion that his own theory of *qi* 氣 was superior to Newtonian explanations. Although the latter were well advanced in mathematical descriptions and provided useful facts and theories, they were not able, in his view, to explain the true, causal nature of *qi*. According to Ch'oe's theory of natural philosophy, his *qi* was manifest in two aspects, that is, a tangible, airy "physical substratum" (*hyŏngjil* 形 質) and a kind of motional, inherent "vital activity" (*hwaldong* 活 動), both of which could be demonstrated by experiments with the help of Western instruments. Another important concept was his "*qi* globes" (*kiryun* 氣 輪). These quasi-physical forms were endowed with innate forces of attraction and repulsion, and thus meant to replace Newton's concept of gravity. Moreover, the cosmos, i.e. Heaven, Men (including their ethical conduct), and Earth, was explained as consisting of endless intersections of—sometimes hardly visible—*qi* globes of different sizes, their interactions giving rise to movement and change.

As is made evident by Jun Yong Hoon's thorough and engaging research, Ch'oe Han-gi—like a number of other scholars in China and Japan—was a product of the intellectual *milieu* of East Asia at that time, where foreign knowledge was interpreted and reformulated in terms of the Confucian cosmology of *qi* more than once. His concept of the physical workings in both the micro- and macro cosmos was of holistic nature and characterized by analogical thinking, while at the same time it revealed scientific misconceptions and misunderstandings. The latter were caused by Ch'oe's inability to fully understand the more complex principles of modern Western astronomical and mathematical theories, and his eclectic and dogmatic approach to the range of theories and concepts of Western science available to him. Doubtless, this problem was further compounded by the terminological ambiguities inherent in the translations to hand. As emphasized by Jun Yong Hoon, Ch'oe never recognized science as a practice in a laboratory or an observatory, but only as written knowledge similar to that in Confucian and other texts. His main aim was to establish a perfect Confucian philosophy, for which Western science was no more than a vehicle for manifesting the unity of *qi*. From a modern point of view Ch'oe's hybridization of Eastern philosophy and Western science appears to be defective, but it is less so if it is understood as an inevitable and first necessary intellectual step in integrating these two different types of knowledge within a pre-modern Korean context.

In his article "'A Flock of Ghosts Bursting Forth and Scattering': Healing Narratives in a Sixth-Century Chinese Buddhist Hagiography", C. Pierce Salguero analyses the short, never more than ten lines long, stories of miraculous healings by Buddhist monks in the *Gaoseng zhuan* 高僧傳 (Traditions of Eminent Monks), composed by the monk Huijiao 慧皎 (497-554) in the early sixth century. Salguero discusses aspects of the wondrous bodies of these eminent monks, including such corporeal *mirabilia* as incorruptibility, appearance of light, fragrances, spontaneous combustion, disappearance and reappearance, and the washing out of intestines. Monks, however, also acted as miraculous healers, by appropriating classical Chinese medicine, invoking divine assistance from the Buddha himself, making use of objects endowed with magical power, such as personal items (alms-bowls, willow-branch toothbrushes, etc.), consecrated water or numinous Buddhist sutras, or by incanting spells and the performance of repentance rituals or exorcistic practices. The author underlines that Buddhist healers were eager to offer methods superior to contemporary alternatives by emphasizing Buddhist healing's exoticism, esotericism, authenticity, and accessability. Exoticism refers to Buddhists as foreign men coming from far away India or "Western regions", with extraordinary bodies and possessing secret, esoteric arts. Authenticity means that these miraculous cures were not

presented as fiction, but were claimed to have been historical, that is, as having taken place at a certain time and place, involving real people and witnessed and testified to by others. Accessibility concerned the fact that Buddhist healing practices were available to a wide range of people, not only rulers, the elite, and members of the Buddhist communities, but also to commoners—provided that they supported the *sangha*. Competition with Daoists existed in this and other fields, which made the establishment of demarcation lines vis-à-vis the concepts of other teachings important. The *Gaoseng zhuan*, says Salguero, is a particularly successful example of a work in which Indian and indigenous cosmological elements are woven together in order to appeal to and persuade the Chinese audience, and this at a time beset by man-made and natural disasters. Huijiao presented his protagonists as beacons of light in such dark times, as bearers of effective knowledge and practices bringing solutions to all kinds of contemporary problems. Among them the power of Buddhist monks to heal, fight epidemics, and even to overcome death remained one of the most pervasive and persuasive aspects in the social positioning of Chinese Buddhism up to the late imperial period. All in all, the *Gaoseng zhuan* is a further example of how, through a sustained and conscious project of literary and cultural translation, Indian models were reconceptualised and recreated for Chinese audiences in an effort to promote proselytization and win official favour.

Looking forward, I would like to give our readership a preliminary glimse into the content of the next issue of EASTM, which will appear just before the Hefei conference in late July 2011. No. 33 will contain Lee Jen-der's "'Laughing Disorders' and Medical Discourses of Joy in Early Imperial China", that is, the English translation of the work that won a Zhu Kezhen Award in 2005 during ISHEASTM's "11th International Conference on the History of Science in East Asia" in Munich. This article has been translated by Marta E. Hanson from Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, to whom we owe great thanks for making it available to Western readers. The second essay to be published will deal with "Needham's Grand Question Revisited: On the Meaning and Justification of Causal Claims in the History of Chinese Science", a contribution authored by David De Saeger and Erik Weber from Ghent University in Belgium. Besides a fair number of book reviews, the issue will also include a review article by Joseph W. Dauben, City University of New York, of Jean-Claude Martzloff's recently published book *Le calendrier chinois*.

As usual, I would like to end by thanking all the contributors, anonymous referees and EASTM collaborators, my Co-editors, our English Language Editor and our Managing and Production Editors, for their help in the realisation of this issue. There is to be a change in the editorial team, as Katharina Markgraf will leave us after having assisted us with the last two issues. Her work will be taken over by Alexander Jost, soon to be a PhD candidate at our institute, whom we expect to be as efficient and excellent a team worker as was his predecessor. Together with Martina Siebert from the East Asia Department, Staatsbibliothek Preußischer Kulturbesitz Berlin, he is also responsible for making our journal available online, a project briefly described elsewhere in this issue.

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